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Woman sues School of Art Institute, ex-teacher over 'extreme sex discrimination'

(<https://chicago.suntimes.com/section/opinion/>)



The School of the Art Institute of Chicago | Provided photo

By
Jon Seidel
(<https://chicago.suntimes.com/author/jonseidelsuntimes/>)
@SeidelContent (https://twitter.com/intent/user?screen_name=SeidelContent)
| email (<mailto:jseidel@suntimes.com>)

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A Massachusetts woman claims in a new federal lawsuit she suffered “extreme sex discrimination,” harassment, violence, retaliation and abuse at the hands of a former faculty member at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

The woman filed her lawsuit Monday in federal court in Chicago under the name Jane Doe. It alleges now-former faculty member John Phillips engaged in sexual misconduct with her and other students.

The complaint also targets school administrators Lisa Wainwright, Beth Wright, Amanda DaSilva and Michael Nicolai.

A spokesman for the school did not immediately respond to a call seeking comment. Phillips in an interview acknowledged a “very consensual relationship” with the student — he called it a “horrible mistake” — but declined to comment further.

The woman who filed the lawsuit suffers from attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, panic attacks, insomnia and depression, according to the complaint. It also alleges Phillips had a history of sexual misconduct with students.

The school knew about the woman’s disorders, as well as Phillips’ history, but still assigned him to be her adviser 2016, giving him “direct control over her academic career,” according to the lawsuit.

The woman claims Phillips gave her and a friend drugs and alcohol, engaged in sexually abusive conduct with them and

photographed the students naked. She alleges he manipulated her emotionally and disseminated nude photographs of her.

Eventually, the woman said she became depressed, struggled in school and lost nearly 30 pounds. She claims Phillips told her not to talk to her friends or her mother. However, she said she managed to text her mother the word "HELP."

The woman's mother called the police, who went to Phillips' apartment and found the woman dirty and covered in urine, according to the lawsuit. The complaint also alleges Phillips answered the officers' questions himself.

Meanwhile, the woman's mother also told Wainwright about Phillips' inappropriate relationship with her daughter, according to the lawsuit. Wainwright allegedly did not report the matter to any school official as she was required. Instead, Wainwright allegedly warned Phillips that the mother was looking for her daughter.

Wright also allegedly emailed the student a copy of the school's policy for Consensual Faculty/Student Relationships.

The woman claims Phillips sent her a text message that read: "you f—ed me and sacrificed my life — you need to do everything in your power to undo the damage you've done."

The school fired Phillips in August 2016, according to the lawsuit.

Jon Seidel (<https://chicago.suntimes.com/author/jonseidelsuntimes/>)

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